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A FEW WORDS

ON

DRINK CRAVING

SHOWING THE

NECESSITY FOR LEGISLATIVE POWER

AS REGARDS

PROTECTION AND TREATMENT

BY

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All reflecting persons must deplore the effects of drunkenness in this country. We cannot succeed in preventing this destructive habit. These few words on the causes of Drink Craving, with suggestions as to a method for protection and treatment, are offered by one, who, as a medical man, has had many opportunities for observation, and is specially trained to trace out cause and effect, with a view of treatment and cure.

In the following observations he has not hesitated to borrow from the papers of Dr. Peddie, Dr. Boddington, Mr. Garman and others who have advocated a like plan of treatment, from the evidence given before the committee of House of Commons on this subject in 1872 appointed on a motion by the late Mr. Dalrymple; from the Quarterly Review, October, 1875, Macmillan, December, 1875, and from a paper read by Dr. Alfred Carpenter before the Social Science Association in March 1876; these should be carefully read by all interested in the well-being of their country. The following statistics will sufficiently justify any effort to expose this evil.

It is estimated that 70,000 die every year in this country from the direct effects of drunkenness. The late Dr. Lankester, as well as his successor, Dr. Hardwick—coroners for Central Middlesex, stated that “75 per cent. of the ^{adult} inquests held by them were directly caused through strong drink.” There is annually spent in Great Britain in strong drinks a sum of £145,000,000, the cost of the government of the country being only £70,000,000. This is a great loss to the country of money taken out of the labour employing capital.

Drunkenness is a great cause of poverty, for by it, not only is money, but time wasted; premature death is also a direct loss; 73 per cent. of the pauperism of the country can be traced as the result of intemperance, at an expense to the country £10,000,000, per annum.

It is the chief promoter of crime, exciting men's brutal passions, causing dishonesty by pauperising the drinker; not one criminal in a thousand has been a temperate person. The cost thus brought on the country is fully £9,000,000 a year. The total amount of our wealth wasted by the drinking system, estimating the money directly spent on drink, and the loss and cost of time and money, is about £270,000,000 a year. All are requested earnestly to consider this matter, and help in devising *effectual* remedies.

In this third edition there are many alterations and additions.

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FEW WORDS ON DRINK CRAVING.

THE British Medical Association, representing nearly seven thousand of the medical profession of the United Kingdom, at the meeting at Edinburgh in August 1876, had under serious discussion the question of the proper treatment of those unhappy people to whom strong drink has become a power and an influence which they are unable to control. After mature consideration of the subject, the Association solemnly and unanimously resolved :

“That excessive intemperance is in many cases a symptom of a special form of insanity, which requires special treatment, with a view first to the recovery of those affected, and second to the protection and advantage of them and society. That in the present state of the law such treatment is not attainable, and that it is desirable that legal provision should be made to render it attainable.” The “legal provision” thus recommended is, that there should be opportunities for placing such insane drinkers under sufficient control, either voluntary or enforced, in some retreat or asylum, to be specially provided and placed under proper safeguards and regulations.

Parliamentary enactments have sought to regulate the drink supply by restrictive licences, and by fining the drunkard ; but legislation has not succeeded in preventing *excessive drinking*, nor in providing for the protection or restraint of those who may have become the prey to the fearful and destructive influences of drink craving.

Schemes have hitherto been devised for cutting off the supply of drink by restrictive licences, rather than for curing and protecting the drink craver. All plans formed for curing the confirmed drink cravers have proved useless, except that of keeping them altogether for a more or less lengthened period from stimulants. The numerous laws for preventing drunkenness show the national desire that something should be done to help the drunkard ; but hitherto our very legislation implies a self control which does not exist, and cannot be assumed. That the confirmed drink craver is infatuated, and not of a sound mind, is evident : for he acts without judgment in taking stimulants ; nothing stops him while he can get it ; neither shame, domestic affliction, nor either the fear of death

itself. He makes himself miserable, and every one about him. While under a paroxysm, he is violent and unnatural. Murders and all kinds of atrocities are recorded in our daily Papers, as committed by these unhappy drink cravers. However the craving may originate—whether it be the result of irregular habits as to the times or the quantity of drink; or of a vain effort to sustain failing power (instead of giving nature the rest she calls for), or to drown troubles and disappointments; or whether it arise without any obvious cause or from hereditary tendency; *drink craving becomes a disease*, attacking as it sometimes does even young men and boys, running in parallel lines with insanity. This craving is irresistible, not from any love for the drink, but from an infatuation in spite of themselves; a loss of self-respect, feelings of honour, truth, the entreaties of the nearest and dearest relations, or even the restraining influences of religion being unavailable.

An unsound mind is also evident from the mischievousness, waywardness, and obstinacy of unfortunate beings under the influence of this malady, often driving them headlong to destruction. Besides, it is but too well known that the frequent legacy of drunken parents to their children is idiocy, epilepsy, paralysis, and other distressing forms of brain and spinal disease.

If not recognised as a species of insanity itself, drunkenness is a prolific cause of insanity. Alcohol flies to the brain, and dethrones reason, often leaving its victims helpless idiots, or raving maniacs.

Is it not then in every way desirable, that the law should not only give to the victims themselves a chance of reformation, but that the households, in which such reside, should be enabled to have that legal protection, without which they are powerless to protect themselves;—powerless because the evil remains unsubdued, and present with them? The house, of which the inebriate has the range, is literally a house of woe, and the freedom of the drinker is the bondage of the family.

Where such a power is at large, the liberty of the one guilty or insane subject is purchased by the loss, (more or less according to the degree of relationship), of the freedom, the rights, the happiness, of all within the house.

There is as yet no law enabling the relatives or friends of such, either to give the inebriate a further chance of reformation by an optional or compulsive admission into a retreat, or of protecting themselves and others from the outrages of such terrible insanity and guilt. Many in a lucid interval wish to

reform, and would gladly avail themselves of such retreats, but many have no such wish, and delight in their own degradation, and in the hopeless misery of themselves and their families; a misery which is hopeless to the latter, because the range of the drunkard's life (to which the whole household is either entirely subjected or most grievously afflicted), is accompanied by two interwoven experiences, viz., that of sottish, thoroughly passive stupefaction, and that of a maniacal raging on all the inmates of their home.

It is frequently with disappointment and even despair that friends and relations learn to their astonishment the impossibility of placing even the most desperate cases under control, and that no remedy exists against an evil that saps the foundations of the peace, prosperity, and indeed the very existence of families and homes.

Further legislative power is sought for by the Medical Profession, and general Public, for the protection and treatment of the habitual drunkard. A joint committee has been appointed by the British Medical and Social Science Associations to promote this, and is now actively engaged in endeavouring to move the Public and the Legislature by papers and petition.

The public, jealous of interference with the liberty of the subject, object to compulsory control, but where there is *paralysis of the will* there must be extraneous control, or misery and ruin will result. A terrific power of mental and moral anxiety, frequently leads these poor people to self destruction, and to the spreading of misery all around. "Liberty of the subject!" where is it? Checks meet us on every side from the cradle to the grave. We cannot take a step but the law stops us. Surely it is folly to talk about "the liberty of the subject" in such cases where the terrific enslavement of drink binds the abject subject in heaviest chains! No difficulty need arise in recognizing the insane drinker. Habitual drunkards may be defined as *those who have lost self-control, and have an irresistible craving for stimulating drinks, which renders them incapable of managing their own affairs, and makes them dangerous to themselves and those connected with them.*

This definition may not appear to apply to bouts of drunkenness, such outbreaks are allied to temporary insanity and cannot be neglected with impunity: the frequency and length of these paroxysms soon lapse into constancy, accompanied by violence and incapacity, unless arrested by delirium tremens, disease, pauperism, or criminal prosecution, this last for murder or other similar violence, committed while drunk and incapable.

A suspension of the use of stimulants is generally necessary effectually to cure this sad condition. The craving is so intolerable that moderation is impossible. For other forms of mental disease there are laws for protection, and treatment.

The complete loss of self control, is a proof of an unsound mind. The drink craver must be treated not as a criminal, but as an imbecile in retreats specially constituted for the purpose. Institutions exist as industrial schools and reformatories, for young people who are not supposed to be responsible for their actions.

The extension of this principle by the establishment of similar institutions adapted to the requirements of the confirmed drunkard, could be easily accomplished by law, under proper guards and restrictions, into which persons suffering under this malady could be admitted, either by their own voluntary act, or by committal if they refuse; the power of detention and restraint should be given, to compel such persons to remain and submit to treatment during the period needful for their recovery; time and careful management being required to enable habitual drunkards to recover their normal power and self control, or the results must be inadequate, imperfect, and disappointing.

The interests of society imperatively demand that whatever inconvenience or unhappiness may temporarily fall upon the individual in this instance, must be endured for the general good. It is a mercy and a charity to the drink-cravers themselves to cut them off, by any means whatever from the sources of their supplies.

In establishments where restriction can be enforced, arrangements should be made for the occupation and amusement of the patient, to aid the restoration of a healthy tone of mind and body. Such institutions have succeeded in America, Canada, Sweden and elsewhere, where the legislature have sanctioned their establishment. Infatuated drink-cravers often voluntarily place themselves in these retreats, being anxious to break the spell that drives them on, gladly surrendering their seeming liberty which they cannot rightly use, for a restraint which paves the way to true liberty. Frequently too, they do so rather than be compelled by legal process; notwithstanding that they know that they must submit to the rules, and that they cannot leave until discharged by competent medical authority. It is also found in practice, that the very existence of such a law in those countries, acts as a deterrent to drinkers.

Dr. Alfred Carpenter, of Croydon, has received the follow-

ing testimony from managers of Asylums for Habitual Drunkards. Dr. Dodge of the New York State Inebriate Asylum, says:—The cures in this institution are a fraction over 62 p.c. Dr. L. Congdon, former Superintendent, reports, “that about 60 p. c. were cured or remained sober after periods of from four to five years.” Mr. Day, from a Boston Asylum for drunkards, says:—that “from the general evidence in his possession, of the 5000 persons admitted since the organization of the Asylum, fully one-third have been permanently cured.” Dr. C. Earle, of Chicago, says:—“About 30 p. c. were permanently cured and reformed.” Dr. Harris, of Philadelphia, believes “the proportion of cures is equal to the failures and hopeless cases.” Rev. J. Willett, King’s County, New York, says:—“that about two-thirds of all patients who are turned out are doing well. ~~“J. Willett, King’s County, New York; “that about two thirds of all patients who are turned out are doing well.”~~”

It is a recognised fact that convicts, after many years forced abstinence from stimulating drinks seldom resort to them when they regain their freedom.

It is objected that the exercise of such control over drink cravers, would put undue power into the hands of relatives and others, who might abuse it to the injury of the controlled.

Great care must be exercised in the framing of enactments, that such power should be carefully entrusted and rigidly supervised. It should be remembered likewise that the first aim of legislation should be to *prevent the confirming* of the drink craving habit. The penalty for supplying drink to a drunken person ought rigidly to be enforced. The object of the present paper is to awaken the public at large to realize the depth and extent of the existing evil, under the assurance that if they fully realize in all its horrors, the misery which habitual drunkards inflict on themselves and their families, a wave of indignation will arise, and the public with one voice will insist on instant remedial measures.

That the insidious and dreadful disease of drink craving takes its origin from even moderate drinking, has perhaps not been sufficiently recognised by the ignorant and unreflecting. The rising generation need training in habits of moderation and self denial; young people should be taught that stimulants are not needed by them, except medicinally. Adults also in health and vigour do not really need stimulants: but if they take them they should only do so at meals, and even then in a *definite quantity*, or they may gradually fall into habits of intemperance. Stimulants lessen mental and physical power in persons of a nervo-sanguine temperament.

The restrictive licence principle for *drinking houses* does not remove the temptation; the monopoly makes these drinking places more conspicuous, luxurious, and comfortable, thus enticing weary souls, the more so as many ordinary eating and coffee houses cannot supply stimulants; thus drinking is encouraged, and the public are induced to resort to drinking houses.

The temptation of stimulating drinks would be much lessened, and habits of moderation and self-denial promoted especially amongst the working classes, if *mere drinking houses* and *public bars* for selling liquors with their inviting conspicuousness were differently arranged.

Men get drunk in good times to get rid of their money; in bad times to get rid of their misery: good wages and short hours have increased drunkenness. I cannot better conclude than in the words of Dr. Peddie.

“It must be evident to all, that from the nature of the malady, unless there be a separation of the drink craver from the persons through whom, and the places where, the morbid craving for stimulants can be gratified, and well regulated restraint placed on the habit, little can be expected in the way of treatment. Such separation is considered necessary in cases of insanity, but still more so is it required in the case of an insane drinker, of whom it has been said without exaggeration, that were immediate eternal punishment, and a glass of intoxicating liquor put in his choice, he could not resist the tempting glass.”

“There are unhappily multitudes of such cases; and what a boon it would be to have even a few hundreds of the worst of them placed in institutions where they would be safely controlled and treated, with the hope of even a moderate percentage of reformation and cure!” Before, however, this work can be successfully carried out in this country, additional legislation is necessary; and we trust that one and all, seeing the wisdom, justice and expediency, of such legislation, will lend their best aid and their best efforts to obtain it without delay.